

Audit Committee Progress and Update Report for Cheltenham Borough Council *Year ended 31 March 2016*

1 June 2016

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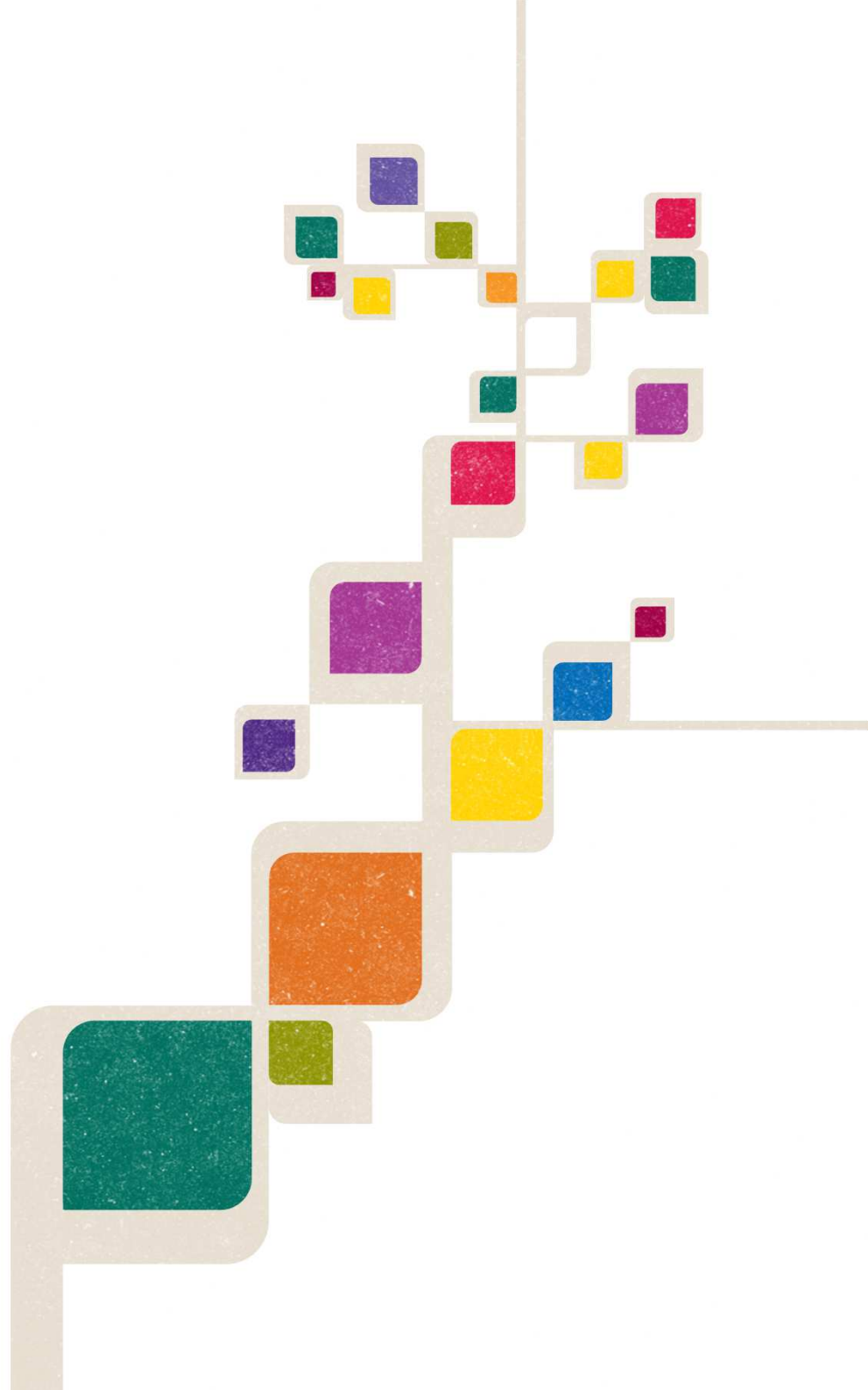
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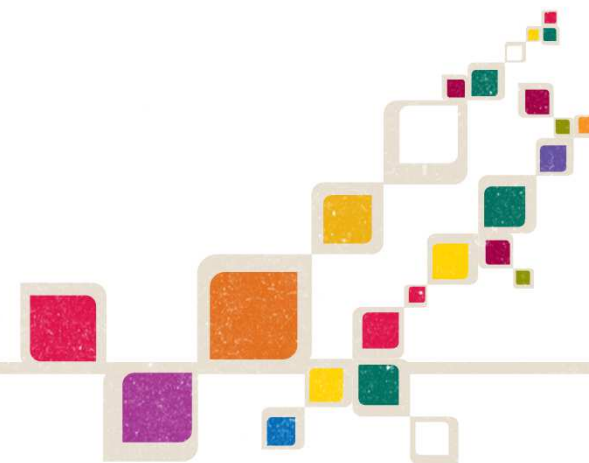
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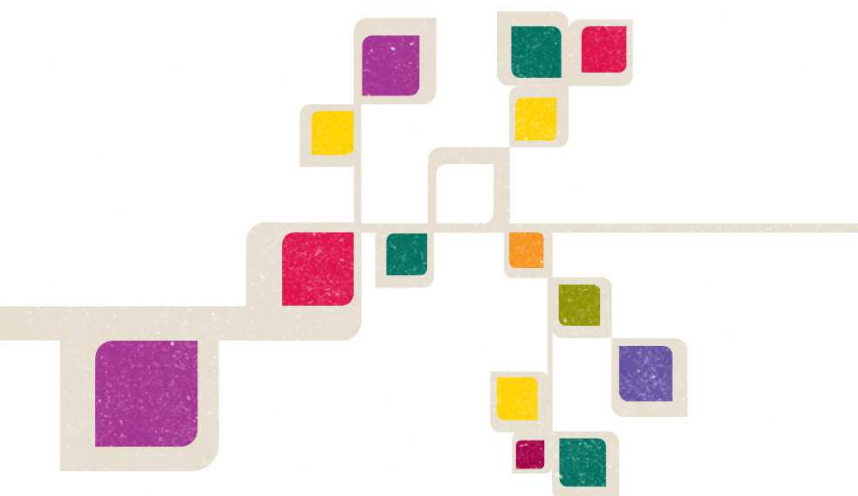
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The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect your business or any weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.



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Introduction

This paper provides the Audit Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

Members of the Audit Committee can find further useful material on our website www.grant-thornton.co.uk, where we have a section dedicated to our work in the public sector. Here you can download copies of our publications including:

- Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company;
<http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>
- Knowing the Ropes – Audit Committee; Effectiveness Review ;
www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/knowing-the-ropes--audit-committee-effectiveness-review-2015/
- Making devolution work: A practical guide for local leaders (October 2015)
www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/making-devolution-work/

If you would like further information on any items in this briefing, or would like to register with Grant Thornton to receive regular email updates on issues that are of interest to you, please contact either your Engagement Lead or Engagement Manager.



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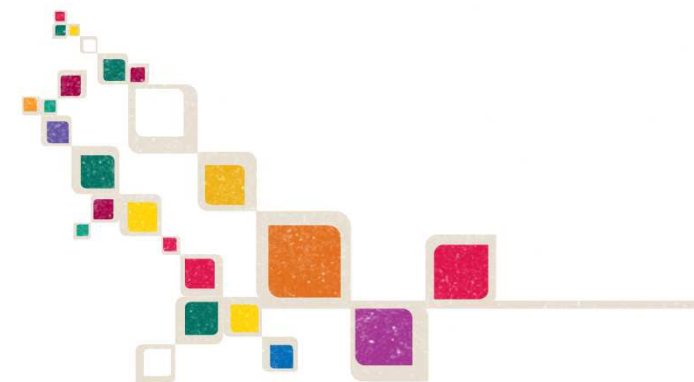
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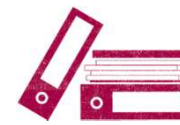
Progress at 1 June 2016



Progress against plan
On track



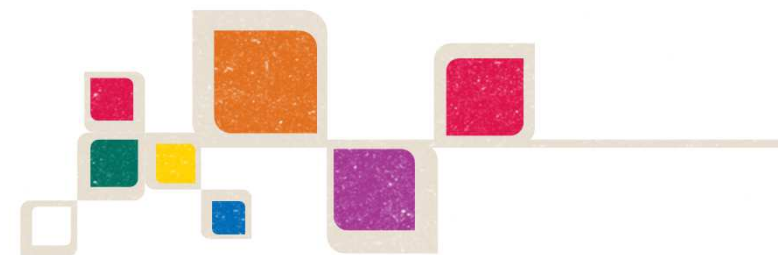
Opinion and VfM conclusion
Plan to give before deadline of
30 September 2016



Outputs delivered
Fee letter, Progress Reports, delivered
to plan

2015/16 work	Completed	Comments
Fee Letter We issued the planned fee letter for 2015/16 in June 2015.	April 2015	We have also recently issued the fee letter for 2016/17, with no change to the fee charged in the prior year proposed. This letter is included as a separate agenda item at this Audit Committee.
Accounts Audit Plan We are required to issue a detailed accounts audit plan to the Council setting out our proposed approach in order to give an opinion on the Council's 2015-16 financial statements. We also inform you of any subsequent changes to our audit approach.	March 2016	This was presented to the Audit Committee at the March 2016 meeting.
Interim accounts audit Our interim fieldwork visit includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating our review of the Council's control environment • updating our understanding of financial systems • review of Internal Audit reports on core financial systems • early work on emerging accounting issues • early substantive testing 	March 2016	Interim audit findings for the work completed to date were reported in the Audit Plan presented to Audit Committee at the meeting in March 2016. As part of our formal communication between auditors and the council's Audit Committee, as 'those charged with governance' we prepare a specific report which covers some important areas of the auditor risk assessment where we are required to make inquiries of management and the Audit Committee under auditing standards. This is included as a separate item on this meeting's agenda.

Progress at 1 June 2016



2015/16 work	Completed	Comments
Final accounts audit Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of the 2015-16 financial statements proposed opinion on the Council's accounts 	<i>Planned for July - August 2016</i>	<p>We are planning to complete our post statements audit in July and August 2016.</p> <p>To help the Council prepare appropriate evidence to support the financial statements, we have provided a schedule of the working papers that we expect and discussed the implications of emerging accounting matters with finance staff.</p>
Value for Money (VfM) conclusion The scope of our work has changed and is set out in the final guidance issued by the National Audit Office in November 2015. The Code requires auditors to satisfy themselves that; "the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources". The guidance confirmed the overall criterion as; "in all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people". The three sub criteria for assessment to be able to give a conclusion overall are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed decision making Sustainable resource deployment Working with partners and other third parties 	<i>February – September, formal conclusion reported by 30 September 2016</i>	<p>We set out the significant risks identified as part of our planning procedures in our Audit Plan reported to Audit Committee in March 2016.</p> <p>The results of our VfM audit work and the key messages arising will be reported in our Audit Findings Report prior to the 30 September 2016 deadline.</p>
Other activities We provide a range of workshops, along with network events for members and publications to support the Council.	<p><i>June 2016</i></p> <p><i>August 2016</i></p>	<p>We are providing a free training session for Audit Committee members from the County and District Councils in June 2016 to support members to understand the role of the Audit Committee.</p> <p>We have arranged a free demonstration of our CFO Insights tool for members of management at the Council and its Go Partners. This will take place in Cheltenham 1 August 2016.</p>

Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company

Local government is evolving as it looks for ways to protect front-line services. These changes are picking up pace as more councils introduce alternative delivery models to generate additional income and savings.

'Better together' is the next report in our series looking at alternative delivery models and focuses on the key areas to consider when deciding to set up a joint venture (JV), setting it up and making it successful.

JVs have been in use for many years in local government and remain a common means of delivering services differently. This report draws on our research across a range of JVs to provide inspiring ideas from those that have been a success and the lessons learnt from those that have encountered challenges.

Key findings from the report:

- JVs continue to be a viable option – Where they have been successful they have supported councils to improve service delivery, reduce costs, bring investment and expertise and generate income
- There is reason to be cautious – Our research found a number of JVs between public and private bodies had mixed success in achieving outcomes for councils
- There is a new breed of JVs between public sector bodies – These JVs can be more successful at working and staying together. There are an increasing number being set up between councils and wholly-owned commercial subsidiaries that can provide both the commercialism required and the understanding of the public sector culture.

Our report, Better Together: Building a successful joint venture company, can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company/>

Grant Thornton reports



ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Better together
Building a successful
joint venture company



CIPFA publication

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally

Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally is a strategy for English local authorities that is the result of collaboration by local authorities and key stakeholders from across the counter fraud landscape .

This strategy is the result of an intensive period of research, surveys, face-to-face meetings and workshops. Local authorities have spoken openly about risks, barriers and what they feel is required to help them improve and continue the fight against fraud and to tackle corruption locally.

Local authorities face a significant fraud challenge. Fraud costs local authorities an estimated £2.1bn a year. In addition to the scale of losses, there are further challenges arising from changes in the wider public sector landscape including budget reductions, service remodelling and integration, and government policy changes. Local authorities will need to work with new agencies in a new national counter fraud landscape.

The strategy:

- calls upon local authorities to continue to tackle fraud with the dedication they have shown so far and to step up the fight against fraud in a challenging and rapidly changing environment
- illustrates the financial benefits that can accrue from fighting fraud more effectively
- calls upon central government to promote counter fraud activity in local authorities by ensuring the right further financial incentives are in place and helping them break down barriers to improvement
- updates and builds upon Fighting Fraud Locally 2011 in the light of developments such as The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy and the first UK Anti-Corruption Plan
- sets out a new strategic approach that is designed to feed into other areas of counter fraud and corruption work and support and strengthen the ability of the wider public sector to protect itself from the harm that fraud can cause.

The strategy can be downloaded from

<http://www.cipfa.org/services/counter-fraud-centre/fighting-fraud-and-corruption-locally>





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